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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Pope John Paul II

Key stories in the media:

In disengagement related stories, Maariv reported that a broad meeting was held at the Prime Minister's bureau yesterday on settlers' relocation, in which Sharon called on the parties involved to expedite their work. Yediot Aharonot and other media reported that Sharon is examining the possibility of moving all the national religious settlements of the Katif Bloc to the Nitzanim region in one piece. Maariv reported that Sharon met the Neve Degalim rabbi yesterday, and that incoming chief of staff Halutz visited Ganey Tal and met settlers there. Both meetings were reportedly held to calm the settlers' spirits.

Maariv quoted senior U.S. officials as saying in the last few days tyhat they will demand from PM Sharon clarifications regarding the construction in Ma'ale Edumim. The paper also cited these officials as saying that the U.S. is interested that Israel will take steps to strengthen Abu Mazen. Yediot Aharonot reports that Minister of Communications Dalia Itzik held a secret meeting yesterday with PA Civilian Affairs Minister Muhammad Dahlan upon his request that Israel grant another cellular phone operator license. At the meeting, Dahlan complained that Israel is not helping Abu-Mazen, claiming that ahead of the 17 July elections, the PA chairman does not have an achievement to show.

Ha'aretz reported that PA Chairman Abbas is promoting a move for elections for the Legislative Council to be relative rather than regional, contrary to early agreements with Hamas, whose representatives told Haaretz they might reconsider the decision to run in the elections. Abbas also ordered an investigations against four PA officials on suspicion of corruption.

Ha'aretz carries a GSS report on the capture of three members of a Palestinian terror cell who planned to carry out a triple bombing attack at the Latrun junction, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and a shooting attack on soldiers in the Ramallah area. Security forces arrested the three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine cell some three months ago, the Shin Bet announced Monday evening. In a separate incident, Shin Bet agents have arrested a Hamas activist in Jerusalem. On Monday in the West Bank, IDF paratroopers arrested two 15-year-old Palestinians carrying homemade bombs at a checkpoint south of Nablus. One of the youths pulled a knife in an attempt to stab a soldier. Ha'aretz reported that Minister of Environment Shalom Simhon announced yesterday that he has asked his officials for a detailed briefing within 24 hours on the process leading to the establishment of the West Bank dump. Simhon said he will instruct the Civil Administration not to allow absorption of household garbage at the dump except for construction waste, and also announced he will enable Palestinians to dump building waste there. The Civil Administration announced it would tighten oversight of the dump. MK Ran Cohen (Yahad) raised the matter at yesterday's meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and was told by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that "the matter troubles him."

The Jerusalem Post cites IDF officers addressing the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee as saying that Palestinians are test firing Kassam rockets, that now have a 9km range, into the sea. Intelligence Branch's Brig. Gen. Kupperwasser said Hamas and Islamic Jihad are looking for excuses to renew attacks on Israeli targets. Referring to Syria, he said that despite plans to pull out of Lebanon, Syria was increasing its cooperation with Hizbullah. He said Syria was liable to demand linking its withdrawal with an Israeli withdrawal according to UN Resolution 242, while trying to create a rift between the Lebanese opposition and the US and France.

Ha'aretz headlined that an emissary on behalf of NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer will arrive

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soon in Ramallah for talks with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and other senior PA officials. According to reports reaching Jerusalem from informed sources, the purpose of the visit by Scheffer's emissary will be to explore options for institutionalizing ties between the PA and NATO.

Yedi'ot Aharonot reported that ahead of the Passover holidays, the Antiterror Staff at the Prime Minister's Office issued a travel advisory calling on Israelis not to travel to the Sinai as terror threats against them in Egypt are very high.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (April 5): "Election year has already begun, and the political establishment is behaving accordingly.. All these ploys mean just one thing -- the government's political maneuverability will come to an end after the disengagement."

Veteran print and TV journalist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The possibility that Israeli nuclear facilities would be subject to the IAEA supervision is not on the agenda at all.... When there are no more totalitarian states in the Middle East; when not a single country calls for the annihilation of Israel; when it is proven that no country between the Mediterranean and the Gulf holds nuclear weapons or plans for their production -- Israel would agree to discuss its status on the issue, not a moment sooner."

Block Quotes:

I. "The Elections Are Already Here"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (April 5): "Election year has already begun, and the political establishment is behaving accordingly. Even if Ariel Sharon remains in office and makes it through to November 2006, his attention and actions have already turned toward politics -- to the Likud primaries against Benjamin Netanyahu,.... All these ploys mean just one thing -- the government's political maneuverability will come to an end after the disengagement. The expectation for a rapid move that would wash Israel out of the territories won't come to pass in the near future. Mahmoud Abbas will have to find a way to survive without too many Israeli gestures, because the Arabs get no concessions in an election year. True, Sharon's promises to keep half of the West Bank in Israel's hands don't hold much water; if he remains in power, he will do whatever he pleases in any case. But as he prepares for his final showdown in the Likud, even Sharon will have to act somewhat like a Likudnik."

II. "No to Nuclear Supervision"

Veteran print and TV journalist Dan Margalit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (April 5): "The American democracy is nothing like the Israeli anarchy. An American secretary who does not coordinate his remarks with the White House will soon become a 'has-been.' This is even truer with lower level officials. This is why Israel must carefully listen to a recent call by mid-level State Department officials on Israel to agree to the IAEA supervision of its nuclear weapons.... The possibility that Israeli nuclear facilities would be subject to the IAEA supervision is not on the agenda at

all. It is a red line. Forever? Yes and no. In practice -- yes; as a vision -- no. When there are no more totalitarian states in the Middle East; when not a single country calls for the annihilation of Israel; when it is proven that no country between the Mediterranean and the Gulf holds nuclear weapons or plans for their production -- Israel would agree to discuss its status on the issue, not a moment sooner. The absence of an Israeli reply to the unusual remarks in the U.S. might be viewed as tacit or conditional consent on its part, but no such consent exists."

12. Pope John Paul II:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (April 5): "The pope not only recognized Israel's sovereignty, but also put an end to a 1,500-year-old Christian doctrine that viewed the Jews' continuing exile as a key proof of the validity of the Christian faith.. The Vatican is expected to play a role in any future resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, primarily on the issue of Jerusalem. And its attitude toward Israel and the Jews will dictate its policy."

Block Quotes:

Anti-Semitism is a Sin, He Said"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (April 5): "Forty years ago, during the papacy of Paul VI, the Vatican published a revolutionary Nostra Aetate that spoke for the first time of the deep connection between Judaism and Christianity and the importance of opening a dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jews. But John Paul II was the one who translated the dead letters of a document accepted only by a minority into an open, warm and personal statement toward the Jews and the State of Israel.... The establishment of relations between the Vatican and Israel in 1994 had significance far beyond its diplomatic import. With this act, as with his visit to Israel afterward, the pope not only recognized Israel's sovereignty, but also put an end to a 1,500-year-old Christian doctrine that viewed the Jews' continuing exile as a key proof of the validity of the Christian faith.... In Europe, which is undergoing a process of secularization, a new anti-Semitism is sprouting, while in Russia, the old anti-Semitism is reemerging in full force. In this situation, the views of John Paul II, who defined anti-Semitism as 'a sin' and 'evil,' were a source of hope. The question of continuity and the fear of a retreat from the path he blazed also have diplomatic significance. The Vatican is expected to play a role in any future resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, primarily on the issue of Jerusalem. And its attitude toward Israel and the Jews will dictate its policy."
KURTZER